

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Palm Sunday

Who will receive the Prince of Peace?

Scripture: Luke 19:29-44

Rev. Steve Filyk

March 28, 2021

Palm Sunday

Opening Hymn: Hosanna, loud hosanna 218

Closing Hymn: Man of sorrows, wondrous name 210 (1-4)

Choruses: Hosanna (CCLI), What a beautiful name

Since the beginning of this year

We have been journeying with Jesus,
Following his story as it was recorded by Luke.

We watched Jesus being baptised by John.

We heard Jesus' inaugural sermon.
We went fishing with Jesus.
We watched him heal on the Sabbath.

We listened to him correspond with a Roman soldier.

We saw him standing with Moses and Elijah.
We eavesdropped on his stories about good neighbors,
about God's concern for the lost,
and about unexpected reversals.

Since the beginning of this year

We have been journeying with Jesus.

If we were to trace our way back,

we'd find that midway through these travels
Jesus started making his way towards Jerusalem (Luke 9:51).

Today we commemorate his arrival,

His grand entry into Jerusalem.

It is a celebration of sorts,

Like a would-be prince
Coming to his coronation.

As he reaches the outskirts of the city

the disciples fetch a young donkey
for Jesus' appearance.

To us this may seem insignificant

But "During Biblical times,
the way a king entered a city
was representative of why and how he came.

If a king came ready for war,
 Then... he would enter on a horse.
 But if a king came in peace,
 he would enter on a donkey...

when David has Zadok the priest anoint Solomon as the next king.
 David instructs Solomon to ride on David's own mule..."ⁱ

The mule is the presidential limousine.

Jesus approaches Jerusalem riding on a donkey.

Those who are with Jesus
 Show him deference and honor.

Luke tells us that people spread their cloaks
 On the road before Jesus,
 Their way of 'rolling out the red carpet.'

As Jesus rides the donkey
 Over the cloaks that have been laid before him,
 The disciples praise God for "all the miracles
 That they had seen."ⁱⁱ

They are singing the 'Hallel',
 those pilgrimage prayers
 That people sang as they made their way towards Jerusalem.

But the disciples are emphasizing those words of Messianic welcome:
 "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"ⁱⁱⁱ

All of this, the donkey, the cloaks, the praise
 Is not lost on a group of Pharisees
 That see this celebration.

They admonished Jesus to rebuke his disciples.

But in words reminiscent of the prophet Isaiah,
 Jesus tells them those Pharisees
 that if the disciples were to keep silent,
 The very stones would cry out.^{iv}

Today in the Gospel of Luke
 Jesus arrives in Jerusalem.
 It is a celebration of sorts.

But if you look carefully this celebration
 Is more muted than the accounts of the other gospels.

Luke doesn't talk about crowds of people
 As much as a gathering of Jesus' disciples.
 No-one has shouted a single Hosannah,
 And no palm branches are being waved.

And when Jesus gets closer to the city,
 He starts weeping.
 Not shedding the odd tear, but weeping.

If you've ever been in the presence of someone who is weeping
 You'll know that it literally sucks the joy
 Out of the surroundings.

So why is Jesus weeping?

After all that he has done:
 his sermons, parables, conversations...
 Feeding hungry mouths...
 Healing sick bodies...
 Raising the dead...

After all that he has done
 To show his people the ways to wholeness
 He knows that the city has rejected him

And he knows that their future
 will be marked by violence and destruction.

Luke's description of Palm Sunday
 Is more somber than the other Gospels.
 It is less a parade that sweeps up the whole city...
 It is less like a political rally
 where there is standing room only...

It is more like a small gathering
 at the band-shell in Riverside Park.
 Yes they are having their own little celebration
 Few people are paying attention.

Others are busy playing pickleball,
 Or riding their bikes or chasing each other around the playground,
 Or reading a book and eating ice-cream.

It is clear from Luke's account that not everyone is fascinated by Jesus.
 Jesus himself knows that Jerusalem fails to truly see him,
 That ultimately they have rejected him.

Much the same could be said for our own time
 And our own city.

Yes, polls will tell us that most Canadians still believe in God and Jesus.
 In 2015, 73% claimed to believe in a higher power,
 And 59% affirmed that Jesus was the Divine son of God.^v

Many claim belief, but few put it into practise.
 Only a much small minority are willing to meet with Jesus
 and learn with his other disciples.

Less than a quarter of Canadians
 attend any type of religious services
 Once a month or more.^{vi}

This is hard for us, for Jesus' disciples,
 because most of us like to back a winner.

This is hard for us, for Jesus' followers,
 Because we want other people
 to be excited about the things we are excited about.

And yet while we gather to worship this morning
 Our kids are shopping at Costco,
 And our neighbors are doing Spring Cleaning.

Jesus wasn't popular in Jerusalem.
 And Jesus isn't so popular in Kamloops either.

But is Jesus popularity what really matters?
 Isn't the bigger issue, whether he is king?

If Jesus is the one who not only teaches us and challenges us
 But who has healed us and forgiven us
 And has conquered sin and death

Should we be intimidated by what others might think
 About how we are using our time
 About what we are doing?

Or should we celebrating that for whatever reason,
 God has given us eyes to see,
 Hearts to welcome and receive
 A king who for whatever reason
 Still remains hidden to others.

There are a number of stories that are told
 About occasions where Queen Elisabeth went
 Through her land unrecognised,
 Queen incognito.

One website listed a few occasions:

“On V-E Day after the defeat of Germany,
 Elisabeth - then a Princess - and her sister Margaret
 wandered amongst the celebrating crowds anonymously.

[Another time while] vacationing at Balmoral,
 she was on a walk in plainclothes with a security guard
 when she ran into a family of American tourists,
 who, not recognizing her, asked her for directions...

Another time at Balmoral, she ran into a local,
 who, not recognizing her, commented on her resemblance to herself,
 to which she only replied "How reassuring".^{vii}

How would you feel if you had been with the Queen
 On any one of those occasions?

Would you be despondent
 That others couldn't recognise her.
 Maybe begin doubting
 whether she's worth spending any time with?

Or would you simply be soaking it all up,
 And then maybe hoping and praying
 You'd find a way to share this with others?

Prayer

ⁱ "THE SYMBOLISM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY" April 7, 2018 <https://completehealthandhope.com/symbolism-significance-triumphal-entry/#:~:text=And%20so%20it%20was%20significant,was%20indeed%20one%20of%20peace.>

ⁱⁱ See Luke 19:36-37.

ⁱⁱⁱ Psalm 118:26

^{iv} Isaiah 55:12

^v Angus Reid Institute "Religion and faith in Canada today: strong belief, ambivalence and rejection define our views" March 26, 2015 p13

^{vi} Ibid p30.

^{vii} "King Incognito" <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/KingIncognito>